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Section II: The Encounter between Strindberg and Nietzsche

Chapter 4: The Impossibility of Influence or How the Story Has Been Told

The significance of this encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg falls along the fault lines of contemporary theoretical discourse. Questions concerning modernity and particularly the collision between religious and secular discourse emerge when we examine aspects of Strindberg's protean production through the prism of Nietzsche's thought. The problem of what it means to be a being in the flow of time is highlighted in the two men's work by the collision between two distinct ways of experiencing time: a linear, eschatological temporal construction and a circular, subjective experience of chronology. This collision expresses a modern, tragic view of existence. An understanding of tragedy refracted through a modernist lens shows itself to be the cornerstone of Nietzsche's philosophy and the basis for Strindberg's understanding of the self.

While the importance of the relationship between Nietzsche and Strindberg has elicited some interest, there is no comprehensive inquiry into the confluence of these aspects of their thought. There are a few sections of a few books that attempt to determine Nietzsche's influence on Strindberg, and all have concluded that the influence is minimal so the subject is of little importance.¹ Instead, I argue that the significance of Nietzsche's encounter with Strindberg resounds within the discourse of modernity, and furthermore, Nietzsche provides us with a theoretical explanation of Strindberg's notion of subjectivity while Strindberg consciously experiments with the fictional possibilities of Nietzsche's thought.

It is a bit puzzling that Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche has been largely glossed over, considering the place that the former holds in the history of modern drama. Perhaps this is explained by the inaccessibility of the bulk of Strindberg's prose works to a reader who cannot read Swedish, but in any case, even those who can read the language have relegated the encounter to an insubstantial moment. It is my belief that

¹ In recent years, there seems to be a renewed interest in the encounter.

this scholarly neglect comes from a reliance on a rather fruitless analytical model. For the Swedish and German scholarship on the encounter has used a critical model based on notions of influence that has failed to register the importance of the commonalities in Strindberg and Nietzsche's work. I part company from this tradition.

Both the primary sources typically used to tell the story of the encounter between August Strindberg and Friedrich Nietzsche and the history of the scholarship which reconstructs this narrative present us with a quandary. How is one to read the seemingly contradictory statements made by the Swede about the effect that the philosopher had on his life and work? The information available to make this determination is indeed limited. The effect of the encounter is generally viewed as being defined by an exchange of correspondence and books. The letters between the two men are few in number and span a mere month and a half. Nietzsche was institutionalized shortly thereafter. Nonetheless, most scholars have relied on this correspondence and a thematically structured sample of Strindbergian texts to recount this tale and determine its significance. This has led to two lines of thought in the scholarship on the subject whose conclusions seem to merge: one which claims that the encounter was of little literary significance, the other which engenders a scholarly preoccupation with influence. As Nietzsche's productive life ended shortly after his last letter to Strindberg, interpreters of the encounter have turned to Strindberg's own statements about Nietzsche's influence on his work, and an analysis of a basic set of *Nietzschean* themes in Strindberg's work from the ensuing period. They have found Strindberg's statements to be contradictory and his *utilization* of the Nietzschean themes to show an *inadequate* understanding of the philosopher's thought. As a result, the general conclusion is that Nietzsche's influence on the Swede was rather trivial and that Strindberg exerted no influence at all on the German. While the first line of thought starts out from a psychological principle by claiming that Strindberg suffered from a sense of growing isolation and an acute inferiority complex, the second uses a textual base, searching for thematic congruity, and deems Strindberg to have *misread* and *misappropriated* the Nietzschean motifs of the *Übermensch* and *der Wille zur Macht*. In either case, the contradictory statements by Strindberg are smoothed out by positing that either he was on his way to the breakdown of his Inferno crisis or he was resistant to the influence of a more radical thinker.

A Survey of the Scholarship: How the Story Has Been Told

The first prominent treatment of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg appeared as an appendix to Torsten Eklund's 1948 dissertation, *Tjänstekvinnans son, en psykologisk Strindbergsstudie*.² Focusing on the notion of the *Übermensch*, Eklund allowed that the contact with Nietzsche might well have hastened Strindberg's development, but he posited that the philosopher's work had little or no significant impact on Strindberg's literary production as a whole. He substantiated his claim by stating that Strindberg's conception of the *Übermensch* was much too intellectual to have derived out of a direct influence from Nietzsche. He traced the Strindbergian inflection of this Nietzschean figure, with its most prominent example given as Axel Borg³ through Max Nordau.⁴ Rejecting Strindberg's reading of the philosopher as being too alien, Eklund took refuge in an analysis of the psychological predisposition which engenders this very concept: »Går man till botten med Nietzscheanismen, både hos mästern själv och hos hans lärjungar, skall man överallt finna en likartad psykologisk bakgrund: en ömtålig diktarsjäl som med kränkt självkänsla tvingats att svälja orättvisor.« (If one goes to the roots of Nietzscheanism, one would find in both the master and his apprentices a fragile poetic soul, who must swallow injustice with wounded pride.)⁵

His conclusion can be summed up as follows: Strindberg's isolated position within the Scandinavian literary community occasioned an inferiority complex that left him predisposed to receive the work of the philosopher with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm, however, resulted in a feeling of compensation for the treatment he felt himself to have suffered at the hands of his contemporaries. His intellectual development was confirmed, perhaps accelerated, but not changed by his contact with Nietzsche.⁶ Eklund's argument depends on the opposition between the

² EKLUND: 1948.

³ Inspector Axel Borg is the main character in Strindberg's novel, *I havsbandet* (*By the Open Sea*).

⁴ Max Nordau was a medical doctor, the author of *Entartung*, an early Zionist, and one of Nietzsche's harshest critics.

⁵ EKLUND: 1948, 369. My translation.

⁶ Martin Lamm, referring to Eklund, articulated this position well. He wrote: »Kanske borde man snarare säga att han [Strindberg] framförallt påverkad av Nordau –

notions of *application* and *misapplication*. In a stance that is quite similar to Heidenstam's conception of his naturalism, Strindberg is said to have *misread* his own Nietzscheanism.

In 1956, Harald Borland published his dissertation: *Nietzsche's Influence on Swedish Literature – With Special Reference to Strindberg, Ola Hansson, Heidenstam, and Fröding*. There is not much that differentiates Borland's reading of the encounter from Eklund's analysis. He argues that:

The suddenness and violence of the Strindberg-Nietzsche encounter in 1888 tend to make the other events in Strindberg's life and literary production in the eighties jolt out of perspective; it is very tempting to regard Strindberg as a predestined Nietzschean passing through a period of unconscious initiation. But it is truer to say that he was moving towards his own form of violent individualism.⁷

Borland reasons that Nietzsche became a justification for Strindberg's ideological turn, a turn that has primarily a psychological significance. If in Eklund's view this psychological dimension was the projection of a compensatory defense mechanism, for Borland, the issue was the justification of an earlier shift to an individualistic ideology.

The Norwegian scholar Harald Beyer's *Nietzsche og Norden* was published in 1958. There is a chapter on Strindberg in the second volume of this extensive treatment of Nietzsche's reception in Scandinavia. Beyer's analysis is based more on literary texts than either Eklund's or Borland's work, but this is less dissimilarity than a matter of emphasis. If Eklund analyzed Strindberg's psychological predisposition and supported his thesis by showing Strindberg's *misreading* of Nietzsche, and Borland built his argument on Eklund's evidence only to de-personalize his findings by moving from Eklund's claim to have access to Strindberg's internal state to a public justification, then Beyer used a survey of texts to make the same claim; Strindberg's *Übermensch* was not Nietzschean, but what he calls an »intelligensaristokraten« (intelligence aristocrat).⁸ Beyer

såsom Ekelund visat – föregripit sin egen Nietzscheanism.«(Perhaps one ought to sooner say that he [Strindberg], particularly influenced by Nordau – as shown by Eklund – anticipated his own Nietzscheanism.) My translation. Citation found in LAMM: 1948, 173.

7 BORLAND: 1956, 24.

8 BEYER: 1959, 58. The term *Intelligence aristocrat* was first used by Bengt Lindfors in 1908.

concludes that with the writing of both *I Havsbandet* (*By The Open Sea*) and an essay on Voltaire, »kulminerte Nietzsche-perioden i Strindbergs liv« (the Nietzschean period in Strindberg's life culminated).⁹ Beyer's text based analysis limits Nietzsche's influence even further: to a period of less than two years.

Horst Brandl's *Persönlichkeitsidealismus und Willenskult. Aspekte der Nietzsche-Rezeption in Schweden*¹⁰ is the main German contribution to the scholarship. He begins with a critique of Borland and Beyer's work, with his main complaint being the inadequate level of abstraction in both men's analyses. Beyer is criticized for not defining the terms of his analysis of reception, and Borland is taken to task for not showing how Nietzsche was used in the poetic production of the authors under his analysis. Brandl's own analysis starts out by tracing the notion of the individual in Sweden. Nietzsche entered the scene at a time when there was a revolt against the established bourgeois notion of the individual, a conception influenced by both Geijer and Boström who were in turn influenced by German Idealist Philosophy. His thesis that the fascination with Nietzsche in Swedish intellectual and artistic circles has its basis in »[d]ie Diskrepanz, die Nietzsche zwischen offizieller Kultur und dahinter sich verbergender politischer, sozialer und ökonomischer Realität aufdeckt« (the discrepancy between official culture and the hidden political, social and economic reality, which Nietzsche uncovers),¹¹ is compelling, but fails to explain why such disillusionment would not lead to a socialist or anarchist solution (to which Strindberg had been previously disposed) or any turn away from a stable notion of received truth rather than an intensified cult of individuality.

Brandl's treatment of Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche does not differ much from the others. As for Strindberg, Brandl's analysis emphasizes a different aspect of his reception of Nietzsche, but once again the results of his investigation resemble Beyer's¹²: Nietzsche represented a

9 BEYER: 1958, 83. My translation.

10 See BRANDL: 1977.

11 Ibid., 30. Brandl relies here on AHLSTRÖM: 1947, and footnotes his source. Translation mine.

12 BRANDL: 1977, 42–43, writes: »Nietzsche kann Erfahrungen, die Strindberg schon gemacht hat, allenfalls bestätigen oder verstärken. Auf seinen neuen Weg wird Strindberg nicht gewiesen. Seine Distanzierung von Nietzsche setzt denn auch schon bald danach, etwa ein Jahr später, ein. Zur Bekräftigung seiner Einsicht in das Untermensch-

»Durchgangsstadium« (transitional stage) in Strindberg's development. Brandl, however, makes an interesting point whose one-sidedness holds the key to understanding how to address an encounter, which has heretofore been written off as being of little importance. In his article, *Skandinavische Aspekte der Nietzsche-Rezeption*, Brandl writes: »Strindberg behält auch in Phasen scheinbarer Monomanie Distanz zu sich selbst. Seine wenigen Briefe an Nietzsche – vier an der Zahl –, die enthusiastische Bekenntnisse enthalten, vermitteln zugleich den Eindruck der Distanz zum Adressaten wie zu sich selbst.« (Strindberg maintains an apparent distance to himself even in phases of monomania. His few letters to Nietzsche – four in number –, which contain enthusiastic confessions give the impression of distance both to the Addressee and to himself.)¹³

His claim is based on a reading of the correspondence that does not allow for a contextualization of the Strindberg-Nietzsche correspondence through an analysis of the letters that they wrote to others about each other. In this way, a rather telling error is made. First, the fascination with influence disallows an analysis of the epistemology of Nietzsche's correspondence, as it is assumed that the effect of the encounter was one-sided. Though Nietzsche produced no work after the encounter, his letters to others about Strindberg reveal how he received and processed the Swede's work. Secondly, while it is impossible to determine whether

liche des »übermenschlichen« Individualisten verweist er dann Mitte der neunziger Jahre warnend auf Nietzsche.« Six years later in an article entitled *Skandinavische Aspekte der Nietzsche-Rezeption*, published in *Nietzsche-Studien* 12, Brandl writes: »Im ganzen läßt sich nicht davon reden, Strindbergs Denken wäre unter dem Einfluß Nietzsches qualitativ verändert worden.« (BRANDL: 1983, 417).

¹³ Ibid. Translation mine. Interestingly enough, this postulation is echoed by the Swedish scholar Gunnar Brandell. In his three-volume Strindberg biography, BRANDELL (1985, 226) writes: »Nu infaller också den berömda korrespondensen med Nietzsche som börjar i förvirring och slutar med vansinniga utrop på grekiska och latin. Nietzsches dårskap visade sig äkta, medan Strindbergs var låtsad, och kontakten som sådan had mest symbolvärde.« (Now began the famous correspondence with Nietzsche, which started in confusion and ended with insane exclamations in Greek and Latin. Nietzsche's madness proved to be genuine, while Strindberg's was pretense, and the contact as such had mostly symbolic value.) My translation. Brandell conceptualizes a notion of real and feigned madness. The methodology here is problematic: the claim that Nietzsche's letters have a mimetic value proven by his institutionalization early in the next year and that Strindberg's letters are merely symbolic creates a methodological claim that Nietzsche as person equals his text and Strindberg's text remains to be interpreted as text.

there was any change in Nietzsche's thinking as a result of the encounter, a reading of both men's letters illuminates a commonality, a mode of valuation that can be traced philosophically through Nietzsche's statements about naming and *das Pathos der Distanz*. This is congruent with Strindberg's negotiation of his past throughout his authorship.

The encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg informs us about a process of subject formation; the issue of influence is impossible to negotiate. Facing this dilemma, the canonical scholarship on the subject has instead been about the impossibility of influence. The fascination with influence blinds these readers to the notion of a commonality, which I believe that both men recognized. This salient issue in the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg is a matter of process and not influence, or put in the Nietzschean terms, a matter of form and not content.¹⁴

It is my contention that the scholarship to date has not treated the significance of the dynamic of proximity and distance in Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche, nor has it considered the same phenomenon in the philosopher's reception of Strindberg's work. As we saw in our analysis of Hamsun's »Strindberg,« this movement was representative of an internalization process of a weakened truth claim that was intrinsic to Strindberg's engagement with his intellectual influences. On the fourth of December in 1888, Strindberg wrote:

Eget att jag nu genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap att »opponera mot allt«. Jag omtaxerar och sätter nya värden på gamla saker! Det har man ej förstått. Knappt jag sjelf.

¹⁴ Influence-based analyses of the encounter have attempted to read the »Nietzschean content« in Strindberg's production. Proponents of this methodology have compared a received reading of *Nietzschean thought* with a reconstruction of Strindberg's reading of the philosopher. In other words, they have read Strindberg's work in order to determine its proximity to *their own* understanding of Nietzsche's work. I am much more interested in a process of valuation that is common to both men. This process utilizes a dynamic between distance and proximity. This process has formal characteristics. The content, the metaphorical complex that results from this process is considered, but it is subordinated to the formal components of the commonality. In other words, I am not concerned with the degree of fidelity that Strindberg's work has to »Nietzschean content.« I am not concerned with whether »Johan« from *Tjänstekvinnans son* is an *Übermensch* or whether the »battle of the brains« is a species of *der Willie zur Macht*. I am concerned with the way that both men understand subjectivity as a creative process and not as a *fact*, and I am interested in the commonality of the way they perform this creative process.

(Strange, through Nietzsche I now find the system for my madness in opposing everyone. I re-evaluate and place new values on old things. No one has understood this, not even myself).¹⁵

The question of the relationship between Strindberg and Nietzsche concerns modernity and not the reified notion of individuality; it concerns intellectual history and not hero worship and influence.

As depicted in the first half of this monograph, Nietzsche's timeliness resides in the question: How can one depict the ephemera of contemporary forms of existence so that the depiction remains as a part of the constituent vocabulary for a yet to be determined future? Late nineteenth-century thinkers faced this problem with an acute sensitivity for the evanescence of a seemingly ever-changing world while exhibiting an equally strong and contradictory desire to create new and lasting ways to describe it. Strindberg found that Nietzsche had given him a »system« for his own confrontation with becoming, yet he understood modernity to be antagonistic to systems and categories. So despite the citation above, he remarked paradoxically: »Det är modernt af Nietzsche att ej göra system.« (It is modern of Nietzsche to eschew a system.)¹⁶ Second-wave modernists tended to designate the times as transitory, as passing away; yet there was also a discernable impulse to create something that would survive its maker, what Baudelaire called the classic in the modern. Perhaps this is what is implied in our paired citations, Nietzsche's systemless system.

The elasticity of the Nietzschean text fits famously with the contradictory elements that confronted a second wave of modern thinkers as they sought to explode the straightjacket of reason. Declining either a return to the mystical yearnings of Romanticism or German Idealism's systemic enshrinement of rationality, a generation of authors was drawn to the flame of Nietzsche's thought, even if his fame came ironically after his own flame had been extinguished. We often learn of the Nietzschean contribution to contemporary debates through the extensions of his philosophy, through his legacy. As a result, we have a tendency to accept Nietzsche's claim that he was an untimely philosopher. Placing Nietzsche in dialog with Strindberg examines his initial impact in dialogic form, thereby illustrating just how timely Nietzsche was for his contemporaries and why he remains so for us.

¹⁵ STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1715 to Georg Brandes, Dec. 4, 1888. Translation mine.

¹⁶ Ibid. Letter 1718 to Ola Hansson, Dec. 7, 1888. Translation mine.

The *quarrel between the ancients and the moderns* seemingly settled by Enlightenment parties of progress in favor of those born late is reconfigured in Nietzsche and Strindberg's authorships as the anticipated triumph of those born posthumously. Bourgeois self-satisfaction gives way to a dynamic anticipation of a future outside of the laws of orderly progression. A consideration of the two authorships creates a window through which one can see the dilemma of the modern subject as he struggles to understand how to become who he might be in an environment devoid of the earthly guarantee of socially stable positions or the divine sanction of an interventionist God. Nietzsche and Strindberg both conceive of the self as a multiplicity and subjectivity as a negotiation between narratives.

This issue is not individuality, but the problem of modernity as it pertains to subjectivity. The cult of individuality is an ideological affect of the moment, not its truth. Nietzsche and Strindberg show us this as they concerned themselves with this antinomy of change and duration and how this sets the parameters for a process of self-description based on contradiction. Their encounter illuminates how the concomitant problem of becoming a modern subject is necessarily inflected by a sense of irony. Nietzsche's paradoxical claims that the world is in a state of infinite becoming and that one should love his fate thereby becomes a timely description of his historical moment. Because of this the name Nietzsche slips into the discourse of modernity with remarkable facility.

Strindberg was self-consciously »modern«. For the quixotic Swede, this meant living in anticipation of a future built with the contradictory raw material of his psychological and historical moment. Like many others of his generation, he regarded modernity as an ever growing complexity without reconciliation. A unified sense of the true or the good or the beautiful dissipated within a self-understanding epitomized by a line he would write in another letter in May of 1888: »Motsägelserna i mitt författeri bero på att jag ställt mig eller stått på olika ståndpunkter för att få se saken från många sidor! Det är ju rikt och humant.« (The contradictions in my authorship result from my changing perspectives, from the desire to see things from many sides. This is certainly rich and humane.)¹⁷ Strindberg had opened his previous letter to Heidenstam by urging his corre-

¹⁷ Ibid. Letter 1611 to Verner von Heidenstam, written around the 17th of May, 1888. Translation mine.

spondent to »Köp dig en tysk modern filosof som heter Nietzsche [sic] om hvilken G.B. hållit föreläsningar. Der står allt att läsa! Neka dig ej njutningen! N är skald också.« (Buy a German, modern philosopher named Nietzsche [sic] on whom G.B. has given some lectures. Therein is all that there is to read! Do not deny yourself the pleasure! N is also a poet.) Strindberg's self-understanding, his »modernity,« formed itself around a constellation of subjective values forged after the loss of an Archimedean point. Nietzsche provided him with his systemless system, which he believed to have articulated his own restless process of emergent multiplicity in a theoretical form.

The epistemology of the encounter is marked by a decided irony, a making proximate of the other through identification, and the taking of distance in order to judge. In other words the correspondence provides us with an actual example of how Nietzsche's *pathos of distance* has a counter-movement, an assimilation of the other through the modality of a polemic. The encounter and its aftermath shed new light upon both Nietzsche's philosophy and Strindberg's authorship. I would go as far to claim that this tale gives us new insight into how the ironic subjectivity of late nineteenth century letters anticipates psychoanalytic theory, while highlighting the narrative core of this irony, the collision of secular and religious discourses. For both men *the death of God* necessitated the narrative substitution of the self for Christ and in this way a study of the two authorships illuminates that the modern paradox of creating within the parameters of both continuity and renewal necessitates strategies based on irony and parody.

If as Jürgen Habermas claimed, modernity cannot »borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*,¹⁸ then how can this self-legitimization function in an age all too eager to create progressive narratives of historical development? The salient issue is not a cult of the individual, but how the conflation of agonistic narratives is central to the genealogical conception of subjectivity shared by Nietzsche and Strindberg. The *genealogy of self* serves as a conceptual apparatus with which the irony inherent in modernism's acute sense of its own contradictions is internalized. It is my argument that these contradictions make Nietzsche and Strindberg our contemporaries.

¹⁸ HABERMAS: 1987, 6.

Excursus: The Problem of Nietzsche Reception

This excursus is concerned with developing a methodological alternative for analyzing the encounter between Strindberg and Nietzsche. The rather thin body of primary source material presents us with a problem right from the start. Two questions immediately arise: Knowing that Nietzsche's productive life ended right after his encounter with Strindberg, and seeing that the scholarly literature on the subject relies on a critical paradigm which provides us with little more than a marginalization of the effects of the exchange between the two men, how can we proceed? And how can we determine the broader implications of Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche? The general difficulty of Nietzsche reception is greatly compounded, in our case, by the enormous range of Strindberg's own reading and the great enthusiasm he expressed for a wide variety of intellectual figures during the course of his long career. Strindberg sang the praises of Darwin, Dickens, Kierkegaard, Rousseau, Poe, Schopenhauer and Swedenborg among others. He played the part of a pietist, a socialist, an anarchist, an atheist, a scientist, and a religious convert at various stages of his life. The diversity of these influences on Strindberg and the mercurial aspects of his production demand a new approach to the subject of his encounter with Nietzsche.¹⁹ It follows that the answer to both of our questions is one and the same and is provided by a shift in the critical model. We can only fruitfully approach the encounter from a methodological perspective that factors in the *broader implications*. Therefore, my own approach is informed not by the degree of influence exerted, but by the category of commonality.

The discussion that follows will address this category, and I will attempt to justify my decision to favor commonality over an influence model of reception. It is my contention that an analysis of the encounter that utilizes commonality instead of influence has the advantage of being more applicable to Nietzsche reception in general and more fruitful in the

¹⁹ The breadth of Strindberg's erudition was great and colored his reception of Nietzsche. I am not treating the theoretical problems raised when applying a theory of influence to anyone; instead I employ an analysis of the particular case for two reasons: 1) the employment of the particular case is true to my theoretical claim that matters of reception are degraded if generalized, and 2) it is not within the scope of this study to make a general claim about Reception Theory; it is my understanding of the particular case that drives my methodology; if my findings are suggestive for other cases, it is a happy coincidence.

particular case of Strindberg. It addresses both the issue of the multiplicity of influences within a reception environment and points to the broader implications of an affinity between two thinkers. I will address both of these aspects in turn.

The name Nietzsche slips into the discourse of literary modernism with a remarkable facility. The ease with which Nietzschean motifs can be appropriated created a considerable range of reception. For despite the differences between those who claim to bear the mark of his influence, Nietzsche's critique of religion, exploration of the boundary between conscious thought and unconscious motivation, valorization of style, and insistence on philosophy as memoir resonate on the same frequency as the works of many of the authors we have come to call ›modernists.‹

Nietzsche's critique of religion accompanied by a genealogy of morals takes issue with the predominance of what he sees as otherworldly thought in all aspects of Western culture, and can be connected to a larger nineteenth century European movement towards a growing secularization of any claims to truth. His genealogical method itself, which attempts to ground unconscious motivation as the *origin*²⁰ of behavior, and sees consciousness as a later development, relegates conscious thought to an economy of misrecognitions and fictional representations thereby anticipating the psychoanalytic understanding of narrative as the means of subject formation. His valorization of style goes hand in hand with his claim for the primacy of form over content. Form becomes the primary determinant of value, and value is relegated to an opposition between vitality and decadence. As a result, the process of self-becoming is elevated, and taste displaces morality. Aesthetic considerations win out over ethical determinations, and the history of the self loses its grounding in a teleological trajectory; the individual thereby gaining freedom and facing uncertainty. These aspects of Nietzsche's project, along with his claim for the primacy of a philosopher's life in the development of his thought, splice together aspects of a philosophical autobiography self-

²⁰ The use of the word origin with regards to Nietzsche's thought is always problematic. The problem concisely stated: the impossibility of positing origins is compounded in two ways by Nietzsche's use of the term: historically through a metaphor employed polemically, and in the construction ›self‹ by the positing of dual origins. This issue will be explored in great detail later in the book.

conscious about the relationship of its own creation with the history of thought.²¹

Nietzsche's particular understanding of the history of Western thought colored his notion of the relationship between autobiography and history. His understanding of history was epochal; he believed that he was living in a nihilistic age, an age that had witnessed the »death of God«. This very event creates a problem for the subject in its moment of self-understanding. For how is the subject to understand his own formation in the absence of a creator? In his answer to this question, Nietzsche rejected the possibilities of biological or historical determinism. For Nietzsche, any absolute solution to this problem was merely a continuation of what he saw as the nihilistic trajectory of European history. The only possibility remaining for Nietzsche, in an attempt to overcome what he saw as a historical environment colored by nihilism, was the creation of a process of self-generation, a *genealogy of self*. For Nietzsche the self is not given; it must be performed. As his Zarathustra tells us: »dein Leib und seine grosse Vernunft: die sagt nicht Ich, aber thut Ich.« (your body and its great reason: it does not say I, it performs I.)²²

I use the term *genealogy of self* to describe this performance, this process of subject formation in both Nietzsche and Strindberg's work. The *genealogy of self* is a hermeneutic device for the construction of the subject. It is hermeneutic in that it factors in the optic of the present, sees the past as a text to be interpreted, and has a truth claim that is weakened by the absence of an absolute and timeless reference point.²³ A *genealogy of self* is a performative overcoming of origins in the moment. It self-consciously highlights the fictionality of the past through the conscious employment of metaphor, and it emphasizes the struggle between contradictory forces: between notions of heredity and self-creation, between the internalized social order and individual experience; in other words *the genealogy of self is the site of the conflation of autobiography and history*.

²¹ For some interesting observations on the way Strindberg relates history and autobiography see ROBINSON, »History and His-Story« collected in STEENE: 1990.

²² NIETZSCHE: KSA 4, 2002, 39. My English translation follows the German.

²³ For a discussion of the weakened truth claim in modern hermeneutics, see VATTIMO: 1997. Vattimo's thesis relies on his reading of Nietzsche's »announcement of the death of God« as a non-metaphysical event.

The *genealogy of self* is the Eternal Return of the same as a hermeneutic circle. It is an attempt to subordinate history to a moment of ritual affirmation.²⁴ This affirmation, however, comes without the benefit of a divine guarantee. The self, itself, becomes a locus of ritual repetition, but there is an irony to this re-enactment. This attempt to subordinate history to the construction of an autobiography is necessitated by Nietzsche's understanding of his historical moment as being marked by the »death of God« and the subsequent poverty of the history of the self in the absence of the guarantee by a divine creator. The irony occurs on three levels that are dynamically related. First, historical conditions subject the individual to the conditions of a »nihilistic« environment, and he must overcome these conditions in order to become a subject. Second, subjectivity is constructed through a ritual, which cannot be shared; the ethos of the myth becomes pathos by wearing the mask of subjectivity as an affect of *der Wille zur Macht*. Third, the past is internalized, yet is subsumed in an agonistic construction that bears the mark of the moment. Competing interpretations that posit both necessity and contingency are in an oscillation, which explains the seemingly contradictory Nietzschean notions of *amor fati* and the chaos of the world. This oscillation comes to rest temporarily in the construction of the self.²⁵ In this manner, Nietzsche attempted to re-enchant the world through a »fabling of being,«²⁶ but he was ironically aware of the fictional nature of his own self-construction. He named his own »myth« and called it Nietzsche. With a radical gesture that both plays off and explodes the bourgeois notion of the individual,

24 See ELIADE: 1991. On page 36, Eliade discusses the myth of the eternal return and its use of repetition. He states, »any repetition of an archetypal gesture suspends duration, abolishes profane time, and participates in mythical time.« While this formulation cannot be directly mapped on to the Nietzschean conception of the Eternal Return, it informs us on three levels: 1) for Nietzsche, the affirmation of the self is an act of creation that is archetypal in that it is a repetition of the initial creation of self-consciousness; 2) the temporality of this action is the moment (see *Also sprach Zarathustra*); and 3) there is a mythical aspect to this affirmation.

25 NIETZSCHE: 1988d. See *Ecce Homo*, »Warum ich ein Schicksal bin«. Nietzsche believed that his understanding of history as the revaluation of all values had a direct relationship to his construction of a *genealogy of self*. The key citation: »Die Entdeckung der christlichen Moral ist ein Ereigniss, das nicht seines Gleichen hat, eine wirkliche Katastrophe. Wer über sie aufklärt, ist eine force majeure, ein Schicksal, – er bricht die Geschichte der Menschheit in zwei Stücke.« The Citation is found in Section 8, on page 373.

26 Vattimo's term.

the genealogy of self leaves us with an ambiguous legacy and a plethora of divergent Nietzsche interpretations. As interpretation is a form of reception, we are also left with another problem: namely, how are we to understand his reception?

In a uniquely intense and immediate manner, Nietzsche touched upon what contemporaries regarded as the key experiential dimensions of their individual and collective identity. From the beginning, canonizers and condemners alike tended to regard him as a critic and maker of a new kind of European modernity characterized by the predicament of nihilism and its transvaluative, liberating and cataclysmic potential.²⁷

In the first chapter of his study of Nietzsche's reception in Germany, Steven E. Aschheim attempts to construct a framework for understanding the philosopher's appeal to a wide variety of groups holding radically divergent interests. He points out that Nietzsche's writings became a symbol of renewal for his »appropriators« who »wore selective blinders«²⁸ and came to a variety of often-conflicting readings of his texts. Aschheim argues that the key to understanding such a wide range of reception lies in an understanding of the context in which the reception took place.

Aschheim sketches out the broad contours of the context for the initial Nietzsche reception in the 1890's in Germany: Nietzsche's critique of »the pieties and conventions of Wilhelmine Germany«²⁹ was »closely related to a broader shift in thought and disposition which marked significant areas of European life«.³⁰ He sees Nietzsche as an inspiration for this broadly based »cultural revolution«³¹ precisely because of the elasticity of the philosopher's categories.³² The advantage of this elasticity was that Nietzsche's thought could be appropriated by a variety of ideological positions, and it was this aspect that contributed most to his popularity

²⁷ ASCHHEIM: 1994, 10.

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁹ Ibid., 11–12.

³⁰ Ibid., 12. Aschheim sees this shift as »the revolt against positivism and materialism, as a generational rebellion against the liberal bourgeoisie, as the era of the discovery of the unconscious, and as an age of irrationalism and neo-romanticism.«

³¹ Ibid., 13.

³² Ibid., 14. »The Nietzschean impulse becomes a potent protean force precisely because it was diffuse and not organized.«

with a second wave of modernists who stood in radical opposition to what they saw as the failure of the first wave of modernization.³³

As a result, Nietzscheanism was not restricted by or emblematic of any one particular ideology. It »functioned by virtue of its implantation into other pre-existent structures, it was not constitutive or autonomous.«³⁴ Nietzscheanism needed other impulses and already existent ideologies, and »acted variously as an inspirational solvent, leavener, catalyst, and a gadfly«.³⁵ According to Aschheim, Nietzsche's writings derived their power because he »had dwelled on what was to become a central and continuing fin-de-siècle European preoccupation: the perception of pervasive decadence and degeneration and the accompanying search for new sources of physical and mental health.«³⁶ He argues that it would be an overstatement to credit Nietzsche as being the sole source of this movement for »[t]here are always other forces and influences at work. Nevertheless, he was its central inspiration«.³⁷ Aschheim posits a Nietzsche who acts as a »prism« through which a rather diverse group of social and cultural »revolutionaries« saw their existential condition. Seen from this perspective, the problem of tracing a purely Nietzschean influence and reconstructing an ideal Nietzschean is an exercise in futility.

Building from Aschheim's findings, I contend that the key to understanding Nietzsche's reception is an examination of the discourses already existent in the environment of the reception. This necessitates an exploration of the pre-history of a thinker's encounter with Nietzsche in order to determine how the name Nietzsche functions as a trope in the discourse of the reception. Aschheim's discussion not only points the way to a model for our analysis, it also implicitly acts as a warning: any attempt to determine influence by measuring the degree of congruency of Nietzsche's thought to the receiver is misleading. For what does it mean

33 What Aschheim calls the second wave of modernists had a wide variety of concerns and perspectives. It is important to make a distinction between modernism, modernists, and modernization. Modernism is an aesthetic movement, modernists are the diverse group of artists who consider themselves to be modern, and modernization refers to a social, economic, and political process. My concerns are with the modernist movement in aesthetics and, in particular, Nietzsche and Strindberg as modernists.

34 Ibid., 15.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 14.

37 Ibid., 13.

to be a Nietzschean? What is the possibility of being a disciple of a philosopher who feared the very idea of having followers? For if one is to follow Nietzsche and take his suggestion to read his corpus slowly and carefully, then the notion of being a pupil of a thinker who believes that a good teacher has no pupils is paradoxical at best. When this paradox is factored into the equation, an influence model of reception that is based on the receiver's consistent exposition of Nietzschean thought is doomed to conclude that the influence was negligible. It is impossible to be a Nietzschean and be ›true‹ to Nietzsche.

Aschheim's methodology suggests an alternative to the dead end of any attempt to map what amounts to an interpretation of Nietzsche's thought onto another interpretation of the same. My own methodology is informed by his findings. I have approached the problem of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg in two moments. The first section of the study explored the discursive environment into which Nietzsche was received. The initial point of analysis was Nietzsche's entry into the literary circles of Scandinavia. The aspects of the discourse of the environment of the reception were examined. I found that Nietzsche's entry into the discourses of the environment was greatly facilitated by the loss of faith in a realist model of depiction and a certain fascination with a vitalist, perspectival, and »aristocratic« model predicated upon the concept of personal authenticity. Strindberg and Nietzsche enjoyed a common status as tropes within this discourse and came to represent the paradox of continuity and renewal.

Now, I will violate chronology and turn to Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche. It is in this moment that an influence model of reception will be eschewed. In its stead, the notion of commonality between the two men's authorial projects will be established. This commonality will be established as a specific aspect of both men's authorial projects. The analysis of their intellectual environment was a contextualizing act. There was and never is a homogeneous *Zeitgeist*.

The reasons for this methodological choice are as follows: the previous scholarship on the encounter has had the tendency to concentrate its energies on the similarities between the content of Nietzsche and Strindberg's thought. Following one influence model or another, the commentators have been content to measure the proximity of Strindberg's thought to their own understanding of Nietzsche's texts and pass judgment from this perspective. In any case, Nietzsche's influence on Strindberg has

been judged to be at best transitory, and at worst negligible. The study of Nietzsche's influence on Strindberg becomes in actuality a statement about the impossibility of influence. As a positive model of influence has proven to be untenable in this specific instance, the scholarship has heretofore relied upon a negative model of influence and has concluded that the encounter between the two men was of little importance.

The weakness of this approach to the encounter is twofold. If we recall, Aschheim's argument is informed by his observation that there is no such thing as a dogmatic Nietzscheanism. His approach to the reception of the philosopher is based on the understanding that the allure of Nietzscheanism resides in how Nietzsche's work speaks to a variety of ideological positions because of its experiential valence. Nietzsche's sensitivity to the multifaceted aspects of modernism precipitates a reception that grafts Nietzscheanism onto an intellectual predisposition colored by other influences and, in a dialectical movement, a reception that is individualized and never orthodox. The problem of Nietzsche's reception highlights the commonsensical notion that there can be no immaculate reception. This explains how Strindberg could so strongly identify himself with Nietzsche's thought while still carrying the influence of others, and how the content of his work can be seen as a misreading of the philosopher. In this way, the concentration of the influence model of reception on the proximity of the content of Strindberg's work to a dogmatic Nietzscheanism misses the point. There is another, more basic flaw as well. It is paradoxical to look for a proximity between the thought of these two thinkers and then to judge the degree of Strindberg's Nietzscheanism by the distance between the philosopher's thought and the Swede's appropriation of it. For the paradox of a Nietzsche reception resides in this very appropriation. The Nietzschean gesture itself takes distance in order to judge, and appropriates under the aegis of re-possession and self-creation. It is impossible to judge the degree of a receiver's debt to Nietzsche through an examination of the category of content.

The notion of commonality should not be confused with the metaphysical concept of a Zeitgeist. Its application concentrates upon the particular works under analysis and allows for an individual reception that factors in the historically informed, experiential valence suggested by Aschheim. In our case, the advantage that this approach enjoys over an analysis based on a model of influence lies in its fidelity to performative

aspects of Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche. A theory of commonality does not attempt to read the particularity of Strindberg's production under the false universal of a dogmatic Nietzscheanism. Instead it looks for points of intersection in the particularity of Strindberg's work and the particularity of the Nietzschean corpus. These points of intersection are derived from an analysis of an existing discourse in the historical environment of the reception. In this case, I have analyzed the discourse of realism and anti-realism in order to understand discrete aspects of status of the self as a creative force in the literary life of Scandinavia in 1889. This has revealed a commonality in both Nietzsche and Strindberg's status as tropes in this discourse.

The experiential valence of Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche can be found on the level of form and not content. The salient commonality between the two men on this level is their employment of a *genealogy of self* in lieu of a standard autobiography. The Swedish *Prometheus*,³⁸ August Strindberg identified strongly with Nietzsche and even claimed to have anticipated the philosopher. He regarded Nietzsche's work as a philosophical justification of his own position and left us with a fictional enactment of what he understood to be the existential possibilities of the German's philosophy. As mentioned, his reading of Nietzsche has disappointed most commentators, who insist that Strindberg either misread the philosopher or was hardly influenced by him at all. They point to the multitude of influences on Strindberg and relegate his encounter with Nietzsche to a passing interlude brought on by Strindberg's own sense of impending personal crisis.³⁹ This is the previously mentioned psychologism utilized by interpreters of the encounter. Conversely, it is the subject and the contention of this study that there is a strong commonality between the projects of these two men and that Strindberg's reception of Nietzsche has the markings of the uncanny experience of seeing oneself in another. However, the exploration that follows is not based on biogra-

38 The Strindberg monument located in Tegnérunden (Tegnér grove) in Stockholm depicts Strindberg as a rather well-muscled figure, posed as Prometheus, sprawled heroically on a rock. I use this term ironically to connote the distance between retrospective and contemporary images of the life of an author.

39 Commentators such as EKLUND: 1948; BORLAND: 1956; and LAMM: 1963 all insist that the essential influences on Strindberg's thought precede his encounter with Nietzsche, and that the German philosopher largely served as a source of psychological confirmation for Strindberg's sense of isolation.

phy and does not attempt to sort out the invisible variables in Strindberg or Nietzsche's minds. Instead, our inquiry will be largely intertextual, examining the trajectory of both men's projects, looking for points of merger. With this in mind, I turn to the correspondence.

To Both Be and Not to Be Nietzschean: This Is the Possibility⁴⁰

Der Erste Proselyt, den der erste Kritiker des Nordens machte, war der erste Dichter des Nordens. Es gibt auch keinen, dessen Leben eine solche Vorbereitung für diese Bekehrung gewesen wäre wie August Strindberg.

(The first proselyte that the foremost critic of the North converted, was the foremost poet of the North. There is also no one else, whose life would have been such a preparation for this conversion, besides August Strindberg.)⁴¹

Ja, Nietzsche! Men du borde ha märkt att jag för tre år sedan vände i *Schleichwege* och *Die Kleinen* just i *Neue Freie* och innan jag hört namnet Nietzsche. Derför sade mig Georg B. på Kongens Nytorv strax efter föreläsningen: »Det borde vara Er man, Sg, Ni som hatar »de små.« »Visste det,« svarte jag, »och ser Ni nu att Sg. hade systemet i sin galenskap.«

(Yes, Nietzsche! But you ought to have noticed that I had turned three years ago with *Schleichwege* and *Die Kleinen* in the self same *Neue Freie* and this was before I had heard the name Nietzsche. That is why Georg Brandes said to me at Kongens Nytorv right after his lecture: »That would be your man, Strindberg, you who hate »the small.« »Right on,« I answered, »and you see now that Strindberg had a system to his madness.«)⁴²

The twin epigraphs for this section were taken respectively from Ola Hansson's article on Nietzsche's influence in Scandinavia and a letter from Strindberg written in response to this piece. In the fall of 1889, Hansson published *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* in the *Neue Freie Presse*, a Viennese daily, which frequently featured the work of Scandinavian writers. Strindberg had published a few short stories in the very same newspaper and took great pride in his contributions.

⁴⁰ It is important to keep in mind throughout, that if the premise of the first section of this exploration was to illustrate how Nietzsche was in timely correspondence with the environment of reception and that Strindberg shared a surface commonality with Nietzsche on the level of discourse; then this section will excavate the deep commonality between the two. However, it is also remarkable how the surface aspects of the reception are reproduced in the scholarship. This becomes apparent in the initial reaction to the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg.

⁴¹ HANSSON: 1889; my translation.

⁴² STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1900 to Ola Hansson, sent around 10/20, 1889.

Hansson's already strong interest in things German and his ambition to become a pan-Germanic author were fueled by his contact with Strindberg. He had interested the older writer in the work of Edgar Allan Poe, but it was Strindberg who had kindled and fanned the flames of what was to become Hansson's burning curiosity about Nietzsche. If Brandes acted as a midwife for Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche, it can be argued that Strindberg played the same role for Hansson's encounter with the philosopher's works and his subsequent role as the first Scandinavian to inform the German-speaking world about Nietzsche's reception in the North. Ironically enough, Hansson beat Brandes to the German-speaking world by publishing on Nietzsche first. If Nietzsche was exposed to the Scandinavian intellectual world through the work of the Dane, Brandes, he was brought back to Germany through these two Swedes.

Hansson and Georg Brandes were Strindberg's main correspondents about the subject of Friedrich Nietzsche. In fact, Brandes had not only introduced Strindberg to Nietzsche's thought, but had arranged both their exchange of books and their correspondence. And so two questions arise: why would Hansson consider Strindberg to be the first acolyte that Brandes had won for Nietzsche (despite the Dane's own silence on the issue), and why would Strindberg protest against this label? These questions have been a problem conflated by the scholarship to date and deemed to be a matter of influence and the resistance to it. It is my belief that these questions lead us to an investigation of something much more intrinsic to Nietzsche and Strindberg's authorial projects: namely, the construction and re-construction of the narrative of self. It follows that the answer to our questions lies in the tension between public and private statements. What follows is the story of these utterances.

In the spring of 1888, Brandes was in the midst of giving a series of lectures on what he called Nietzsche's »Aristocratic Radicalism« when he met Strindberg on Kongens Nytorv in Copenhagen. According to the October 20th, 1889 letter from Strindberg to Ola Hansson and a letter from Strindberg to Brandes on the 22nd of April 1890, Brandes is reported to have said: »Det maa være Deres Mand Strindberg, De som hader de smaa.« (That may be your man Strindberg, you who hate the small.)⁴³ Brandes not only introduced Strindberg to Nietzsche's work, he also

43 My translation.

wrote to Nietzsche about Strindberg. He first mentions Strindberg to the German in a letter from April 3, 1888: »Wenn Sie Schwedisch lesen, mache ich Sie auf das einzige Genie Schwedens, August Strindberg, aufmerksam ... Wenn Sie über die Frauen schreiben, sind sie sehr ähnlich.« (If you read Swedish, I would like to present and make you aware of Sweden's only genius, August Strindberg. When you write about women, you are very similar.)⁴⁴

Strindberg claimed to have sent Nietzsche a copy of *Fadren* (*The Father*) in a French translation in April of the same year.⁴⁵ Nietzsche never got the package, but received another copy of the tragedy in November. On October 2, Strindberg wrote Brandes thanking him for Nietzsche's book *Der Fall Wagner* (*The Case of Wagner*) and calling the philosopher »den mest frigjorda, den modernaste af oss alla (naturligtvis icke minst i kvinno-frågan)« (the most liberated, the most modern of us all (naturally not least of all regarding the women's question)).⁴⁶ Brandes relayed the Swede's enthusiasm to Nietzsche. In a letter written just four days later, he remarked: »Ich habe ein Exemplar des Buches an den grössten schwedische Schriftsteller August Strindberg gegeben, den ich ganz für Sie gewonnen haben. Er ist ein wahres Genie, nur ein bisschen verrückt wie die meisten Genies (und Nicht-Genies).« (I have sent a copy of the book to the greatest Swedish author, August Strindberg, whom I have won over for you. He is a true genius, although a bit crazy like most geniuses (and non-geniuses).)⁴⁷ Nietzsche became quite excited over the news that he had won a »true genius« as a new reader. He wrote Heinrich Köselitz just eight days later, and in a statement that closely paraphrased Brandes, told his friend the news.⁴⁸ On October 20, he asked

44 Georg Brandes to Friedrich Nietzsche. Letter collected in NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 185–186. The English is my translation.

45 STRINDBERG: 1961, 127. Letter 1715 to Georg Brandes dated November 29, 1888: »Nietsche [sic] sände jag *Fadren* för 8 månader sedan till hans förläggares adress. Nu går en till.« My translation. »I sent Nietzsche *The Father* eight months ago to his publisher's address. Now here goes another.«

46 STRINDBERG: 1961, 127. Letter 1647 to Georg Brandes dated October 2, 1888.

47 Georg Brandes: Letter to Friedrich Nietzsche dated October 6, 1888. Collected in NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 320. Translation mine.

48 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 450. Letter to Heinrich Köselitz dated October 14, 1888: »Er [Brandes] hat ein Exemplar meiner Schrift an den größten schwedische Schriftsteller, der ganz für mich gewonnen sei, August Strindberg, gegeben, er nennt ihn ein »wahres Genie«, nur etwas verrückt.« Nietzsche repeated the same message in a November 13

Brandes for Strindberg's address so that he could send him a copy of *Götzendämmerung*.⁴⁹ By mid November, Nietzsche had received a copy of Strindberg's *Giftas* (*Les mariés*), apparently from Brandes.⁵⁰ The Dane wrote Nietzsche on November 16, stressing the similarity between the two men's misogynist views, quoting Strindberg on his identification with Nietzsche, and urging Nietzsche to read Strindberg's aforementioned tragedy, *Fadren* (*The Father*).⁵¹ Nietzsche read both the tragedy and the marriage novellas in French translation and was moved to remark to Köselitz:

Diese Tage machte ich die gleiche Reflexion bei einem wahrhaft genialen Werk eines Schweden, des mir von Dr. Brandes als Hauptverehrer vorgestellten August Strindberg. Es ist die französische Cultur auf einem unvergleichlich stärkeren und gesünderen fond: der Effect ist bezaubernd: *Les mariés* heißt es, Paris 1885 – sehr curios, wir stimmen über das »Weib« absolut überein – es war bereits Dr. Brandes aufgefallen.

(These days I have had the same reflection on a truly ingenious work by a Swede, August Strindberg, who was introduced to me as a great admirer by Dr. Brandes. It is French culture from an incomparably stronger and healthier source: the effect is enchanting: it's called *Getting Married*, Paris 1885 – very curious, we agree on »woman« absolutely – Dr. Brandes already noticed this.)⁵²

Nietzsche's admiration and identification with Strindberg continued in a letter to Brandes shortly thereafter where Nietzsche remarked: »Meine aufrichtige Bewunderung, der nichts Eintrag thut, als das Gefühl, mich dabei ein wenig mitzubewundern.« (My most unreserved admiration,

letter to Köselitz. The difference, the past participle *gewonnen* is replaced by *eingenommen*.

49 Ibid., 456–457. Friedrich Nietzsche, letter to Georg Brandes, dated October 20, 1888: »... (– der Titel ist jetzt: Götzendämmerung. Oder: Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt) möchte ich sehr gern auch dem von Ihnen mit so ehrenden Worten vorgestellten Schweden ein Exemplar senden. Nur weiß ich seinen Wohnort nicht. – Diese Schrift ist meine Philosophie *in nuce* – radikal bis zum Verbrechen ...«

50 *Married* or *Getting Married*, depending on which English translation you pick up.

51 NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 353. Georg Brandes, letter to Friedrich Nietzsche dated November 16, 1888: »Der tolle Schwede heisst August Strindberg; er wohnt hier. Seine Adresse ist Holte bei Kopenhagen. Er liebt Sie besonders, weil er meint seinen Frauenhass bei Ihnen zu finden ... Als er in den Zeitungen die Referate über meine Frühlingsvorlesungen las, sagte er: es ist erstaunlich mit diesem Nietzsche, vieles bei ihm ist, als ob ich es geschrieben hätte. In französischer Sprache ist sein Drama *Père* mit einem Vorwort von Zola erschienen.«

52 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 479: Letter to Heinrich Köselitz dated November 16, 1888. Translation mine.

which is marred only by the feeling that in admiring him I also admire myself a little.)⁵³ So, on the surface, Brandes had arranged a mutual admiration society with two members who were united by their views on women. However, Nietzsche's remark above displays the ironic distance that he kept from the encounter. He simultaneously distanced himself through irony from his admiration for Strindberg and brought his own valuation closer to himself. For as he admires the Swede; he admires himself.

This activity, at once a distancing and a making proximate, is intrinsic to the Nietzschean notion of *der Wille zur Macht* (the will to power) as an interpretive agency and the ascription of values made possible by *das Pathos der Distanz* (the Pathos of Distance).⁵⁴ »Aus diesem *Pathos der Distanz* heraus haben sie sich das Recht, Werthe zu schaffen, Namen der Werthe auszuprägen, erst genommen.« (It is out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and coin names for values.)⁵⁵ For Nietzsche, the noble perspective allows a distance to phenomena. This distance enables a valuation of these phenomena and this valuation coincides with naming. Naming, in turn, is a means of taking possession:

Das Herrenrecht, Namen zu geben, geht so weit, dass man sich erlauben sollte, den Ursprung der Sprache selbst als Machtäusserung der Herrschenden zu fassen: sie sagen »das ist das und das,« sie siegeln jegliches Ding und Geschehen mit einem Laute ab und nehmen es dadurch gleichsam in Besitz.

(The lordly right of giving names extends so far that one should allow oneself to conceive the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say »this is this and this,« they seal every thing and event with a sound and, as it were, take possession of it.)⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid.: Letter to Georg Brandes dated November 20, 1888. Translation in MIDDLETON: 1996, 327.

⁵⁴ There are numerous references in the *Nachlass* for Nietzsche's definition of *der Wille zur Macht* as an interpretive agent and as a pathos. As for *das Pathos der Distanz*, the best examples are found in aphorism 257 of *Jenseits von Gute und Böse* and Essay 1, section 2 of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. The relationship between these Nietzschean tropes and the creation of subjectivity will be developed at much greater length in a later chapter.

⁵⁵ NIETZSCHE: 1993, 259. English translation in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 260. The English translation is found in KAUFMANN and HOLLINGDALE: 1967, 26.

Possession brings the phenomena closer to oneself. The pathos of distance that interprets phenomena from a noble perspective, also engages other perspectives. This engagement is intrinsic to the Nietzschean genealogy and takes the form of a polemic (eine Streitschrift). In the *Vorrede* to *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (*On the Genealogy of Morals*), Nietzsche claims that a polemic is an »Auseinandersetzung« that makes former influences, in that case Schopenhauer, contemporary.⁵⁷ Polemic, then, is a pathos of engagement, a means of making another perspective proximate. The oscillation between a pathos of interpretation, which expands the self towards another perspective, and a pathos of distance, which facilitates the organization of interpretations into a system of values, is essential for the Nietzschean notion of the necessary fiction of self-hood. For if his genealogy of morals constructed a »history« of the creation of societal consciousness through an internalization process, then we must remember that Nietzsche had previously posited: »unser Leib ist ja nur ein Gesellschaftsbau vieler Seelen.« (for our body is only a social structure composed of many souls.)⁵⁸ This internalization process is put under the microscope in *Ecce Homo* by means of a *genealogy of self*. The Nietzschean process of the creation of self-hood, the ascription of value to the fictional doer in light of the deed, will be revisited in the next chapter of this study. As for now, suffice it to say that the dynamic of distance and proximity is common to both Nietzsche's genealogical method and his processing of Strindberg as an external phenomenon. This dynamic would have its echoes in Strindberg's own formulation of the problem of Nietzsche's influence: the ambiguity of identification and distancing that the commentary has up to now taken as a psychological aspect of the anxiety of influence rather than an epistemological problem.

In the late fall, Strindberg and Nietzsche entered into a short-lived correspondence. The first letter came from Nietzsche to Strindberg on November 27, 1888. The correspondence lasted only until Nietzsche's nervous collapse shortly after the New Year. During this period of correspondence the two men exchanged some books. As mentioned, Strindberg sent Nietzsche *Giftas* (*Getting Married*) and *Fadren* (*The Father*) in November. At the end of the fall, Nietzsche sent Strindberg *Der Fall*

57 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 252

58 NIETZSCHE: 1993, 33. The English translation is in HOLLINGDALE: 1990, 49. The citation comes from *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Aphorism 19.

Wagner (The Case of Wagner) and *Götzendämmerung (Twilight of the Idols)*, and in the middle of December, *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)*. Strindberg sent Nietzsche the novella, *Samvetsqual (Pangs of Conscience)* and shortly thereafter he borrowed Nietzsche's *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches (Human, All Too Human)* from Ola Hansson, probably in January of 1889.⁵⁹ The tone of the correspondence escalated from an air of mutual admiration, to an attempt by Nietzsche to use Strindberg to forward his plans to have his works translated, to a dizzying and cryptic exchange of letters at its terminus.

Throughout the period of the correspondence with Nietzsche, Brandes kept in touch with Strindberg through the mail. On the subject of the German philosopher, he responded to the Swedish writer's exuberance with moderation. Brandes' attitude towards Nietzsche's work was measured by sober experience. His reply to Strindberg's intoxicated declaration that Nietzsche was a liberator who heralded the decline of the West reads as paternal advice: »Meget hos ham synes mig mindre nyt end det forekommer Dem og ham selv. Hans Antikristendom kan jo ikke – det vil De vist indrømme mig – gjøre et særdeles dybt Indtryk paa den, der i 20 Aar og mere har baaret – i lang Tid ene – Odiet af at være Nordens Antikrist.« (Much in him seems less new to me than it does to both you and himself. His anti-Christianity can certainly not – that you must allow me – make an especially deep impression on the one – who for 20 years and more has borne – for a long time alone – the odium of being the Anti-Christ of the North.)⁶⁰

Brandes continued his evenhanded approach to Nietzsche in both his public communication and his private correspondence to Strindberg. Strindberg began to respond more moderately to Brandes, even questioning the philosopher's sanity at one point. It is here that an interesting twist to this story takes shape. Strindberg's final letter about Nietzsche to Brandes was written the 22nd of April 1890. The letter came in response to an April 20th letter from the Danish critic where he issued a stern warning: »De maa endelig ikke fordybe Dem saaledes i Nietzsche. Der er Element i

59 Strindberg also may have read *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, mentioned in letters to Hansson and he later read *Der Willie Zur Macht (The Will to Power)*, that infamous collection of notebook entries edited by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth. Strindberg mentions this work in his Blue Book and an essay, »Religious Renaissance.«

60 Georg Brandes, letter to August Strindberg dated December 5, 1888. My translation. Letter collected in BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 295.

ham, som er at bruge, et andet, som leder Følelsen og Tanken vild. De er som Poet ikke mistroisk nok overfor Idègang.» (At the end of the day, you ought not to engross yourself so in Nietzsche. There is an aspect of him to use, and another, which can lead your feelings and thoughts astray. You, as you are a poet, are not wary enough over the course of your ideas.)⁶¹ In the same letter, Brandes described his misgivings about the political implications of Nietzsche's disgust for the French Revolution, urging Strindberg to »anvende Deres kritiske Hoveds Kritik« (use your critical sense.)⁶² Strindberg responded two days later. The April 22nd letter to Brandes opened with an explanation of how Strindberg had anticipated Nietzsche and how the philosopher's *program* coincided with his own. He continued by explaining that Brandes himself had recognized this congruency and then launched into a tirade about his persecution at the hands of »små tyranner till partivänner som vill sätta mig på dårhus därför – jag hade rätt i qvinnofråga etc.« (an alliance of minor tyrants who want to put me in the insane asylum because I was right about the women's question, etc.).⁶³ Then Strindberg bared the device. The entire *Nietzsche problem*, he explained, is to be staged in the form of a novel.⁶⁴ It seems that Strindberg could not decide what was philosophically true until he worked it out in a fictional world. The question was not *to be or not to be* Nietzschean, but rather what might be possible in a confrontation of the inner life of the self in constant formation and reformation with an internalized intellectual force. Consequently, Strindberg's response to Brandes' warning was to reassure him that the problem would be enacted as a *possibility*. The conflation of an external intellectual force with Strindberg's own internal imperatives is projected onto the scene of writing, the locus of naming. Strindberg, in this moment, saw his public expression as being a result of the struggle between a proximity to Nietzsche and a desire to distance himself through a staging of this very struggle. He would take possession of Nietzsche's thought by giving it his

61 Ibid., 300. Georg Brandes, Letter to August Strindberg dated April 20, 1890. My translation.

62 Ibid. My translation.

63 Ibid., 301. August Strindberg: Letter to Georg Brandes dated April 22, 1890. My translation.

64 Ibid. »Hela problemet håller jag nu på att sätta i scen i en stor roman till hösten (*I havsbandet*).« (I am in the midst of staging the entire problem in a great novel to come out in the fall (*By the Open Sea*).) My translation.

own name. This dynamic explains his paraphrasing of Brandes back to the Dane in the same letter: »Man skall gå igenom (befruktas av) N. och sedan rensa sig ifrån honom.« (One should go through (be fertilized by) N. and then purge oneself of him.)⁶⁵ Like Brandes, Strindberg was much more interested in dissemination than insemination.

This paraphrase leaves us with a riddle to solve. For if Strindberg truly felt that his program coincided with Nietzsche's, that he had anticipated him, that Nietzsche's writings were so close to his own that he experienced the sensation that the philosopher had written his own thoughts, how could he purge himself of his »influence«? Perhaps Brandes' warning about the two sides of Nietzsche, one to be used and the other to eschew, alerts us to an answer to our question. This answer informs us of the location where Strindberg's project coincided with Nietzsche's philosophy; it resides in the role that the past plays in the construction of a narrative of self, through the dynamic between interpretive distance and proximity of engagement; it also resides in philosophy as a fictional possibility with interstices in which the self is reconciled with its history.

If Brandes' warning and Strindberg's response alerts us to how Strindberg's seemingly paradoxical proximity and distance to Nietzsche's thought reveals the epistemological commonality in their respective authorial projects, Strindberg's correspondence with others about Nietzsche informs us about another dynamic which problematizes the work of the scholarship. Here the salient issue is the relationship that Strindberg perceives himself to have with his own past. With this in mind, we return to our original questions: why did Ola Hansson perceive Strindberg as the first acolyte won by Brandes for Nietzsche in the North and why did Strindberg protest this labeling?

Strindberg had enthusiastically spread the word about the philosopher in his voluminous correspondence with his many literary friends. He began to be associated with Nietzsche as a result of his own enthusiasm. Shortly after his meeting with Brandes, Strindberg read Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (*Beyond Good and Evil*). His first reference to Nietzsche came in a letter to Verner von Heidenstam dated May 17, 1888: »Köp dig en tysk modern filosof som heter Nietsche [sic] om hvilken G.B. hållit föreläsningar. Der står allt att läsa! Neka dig ej njutningen! N är skald också.« (Buy a German, modern philosopher named Nietsche

65 Ibid. My translation.

[sic] on whom G.B. has given some lectures. Therein is all that there is to read! Do not deny yourself the pleasure! N is also a poet.)⁶⁶ Praise of and enthusiasm over Nietzsche's books became a common theme in Strindberg's letters through 1890. As Strindberg wrote to Nietzsche himself at the beginning of December 1888: »Je termine tous mes lettres à mes amis: lisez Nietzsche: C'est mon Carthage est delenda!« (I end all my letters to my friends: read Nietzsche: This is my Carthage must be destroyed!)⁶⁷

Strindberg expressed his enthusiasm for the philosopher in numerous ways. He received Nietzsche as a fertilizing agent: »Emellertid mitt aandsliv har i sitt uterus mottagit en förfärlig sädesuttömning af Friedrich Nietzsche, så att jag känner mig full som en hynda i buken.« (Meanwhile, my spiritual life has taken in a terrible emptying of Friedrich Nietzsche's seed, so that I feel filled like a bitch in the belly.)⁶⁸ Then, consequently, Nietzsche was a source of inspiration already enshrined in the literary pantheon: »Skrifver samtidigt en modern roman i Nietzsche och Poes fotspår.« (At the same time, I am writing a modern novel which follows in Nietzsche and Poe's footsteps.)⁶⁹ As such, the philosopher intoxicated Strindberg, and strengthened his conviction, but he threatened his sanity:

Jag tror Nietzsche gör mig blind, emedan min hjerna är som ett sår! Af öfveranstängning! Men han gör mig visst tokig också! Ty hans oerhörda själfkänsla i sina böcker ha[r] gifvit mig en dylik. Hvilket hindrar icke att min gråa hjernbark kan brista, som den nog gör ...

(I believe that Nietzsche is making me blind, because my brain is like a sore! From over exertion! And he also is making me crazy! For the unprecedented self-esteem in his books has given me the same. This will not keep my gray brain bark from bursting, which it certainly will ...) ⁷⁰

Nietzsche strengthened Strindberg because his work served as a unifying force, an explanation for Strindberg's own production: his systemless

66 STRINDBERG: 1961, 91, letter 1611. My translation.

67 NIETZSCHE: 1984b, 376, letter 621. Letter from August Strindberg to Friedrich Nietzsche dated the beginning of December, 1888. Translation from the French is mine.

68 STRINDBERG: 1961, 112. August Strindberg: letter to Edvard Brandes, Danish playwright and politician and Georg's brother dated September 4, 1888. Letter 1632. Translation to English by Stefanie von Schnurbein.

69 STRINDBERG: 1938, 57. Letter from August Strindberg to Ola Hansson dated July 6, 1889. My translation.

70 STRINDBERG: 1961, 236. August Strindberg: letter 1761 to Ola Hansson dated January 28, 1889.

system.⁷¹ He threatened Strindberg's sanity because the surety with which Nietzsche expressed himself, this source of confirmation for Strindberg, also threatened the Swede; the self-confidence that springs from a feeling of certainty, the sensation of isolation that comes when one thinks oneself a prophet without a God with whom he could communicate. This isolation was in both men's minds (and this is what was hypostatized by Hansson in his Nietzsche essay) a result of their understanding of nihilism and of what they considered to be historically derived decadence. As Strindberg wrote to Georg Brandes at the close of 1888:

För mig står Nietzsche som bebådaren af Europas och kristendomens undergång. Orientens vaknande och återinträdande i sina rättigheter så som adeln hvilken de äldsta anorna. Kristendom är mig nemlig ett barbari ... ett bakslag i utvecklingen, de smås, de uslas, kastraternas, kvinnornas, barnens och vildernas religion, därför är de i rak strid med vår evolution som vill skydda den starke mot den dåliga arten ... Nietzsche är mig därför den moderne anden som vågar predika den starkes, den klokes rätt gentemot de dumma, de små (demokraterna), och jag kan tänka den stora andens lidande under de många smås våld ... och jag helsar i honom befriaren och slutar såsom hans katekumen mina bref till literära vänner så: läs Nietzsche.

(For me, Nietzsche stands as the herald of the decline of Europe and Christianity. The Orient's awakening and return to its rights as the nobles with the oldest lineage. I regard Christianity as barbarism ... a regression in development, the religion of the small, the wretched, the eunuchs, the women, the children, and the savages; therefore it is in direct conflict with our evolution which wants to protect the strong against inferior types ... As a result, Nietzsche is, for me, the modern spirit who dares to preach the strong, the intelligent's right over the dumb, the small (the democrats), and I can also imagine the great spirit's suffering from the violence of the small ... and I greet Nietzsche as a liberator, and end my letters to my literary friends with what passes as his catechism: read Nietzsche.)⁷²

Strindberg's description of Nietzsche's mission as the herald of the decline of the West carries the resonance of an overheated sermon. It also sets up an opposition between the great man who sees the coming of the end of life as he knows it, and those who enjoy the fruits of this decline

71 STRINDBERG: 1961, 192. August Strindberg: letter 1715 to Georg Brandes dated December 4, 1888. »Eget att jag genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap att »opponerar mot allt.' Jag omtaxerar och sätter nya värden på gamla saker! Det har man ej förstått. Knappt jag själf.« My translation: »Strange that I find through Nietzsche the system in my madness in opposing myself against everything. I re-evaluate and place new values on old things. No one has understood this. I barely understand it myself.«

72 STRINDBERG: 1961, 192. August Strindberg: letter 1715 to Georg Brandes dated December 4, 1888.

and persecute the man of vision. If Nietzsche represented this man for Strindberg, it was because he identified himself with this position as well. For in 1888, Strindberg was living in exile, isolated from his countrymen, in desperate straits, and, perhaps, most importantly for this discussion, disillusioned with his own past. His socialist political agenda was now a source of discomfort. He had become the *bête noire* of Swedish letters: viewed as a reactionary by the left and as an immoralist by the right. In a May 25th letter to Heidenstam, Strindberg described his understanding of his own authorship as such:

Mitt författeri: ett sökande efter sanningen! Idiotisk i sjelf kanske, ty sanningen är endast konventionell. Man öfverenskommer massvis att detta skall vara sant, och så det andra lögn! ... Motsägelserna i mitt författeri bero på att jag ställt mig eller stått på olika ståndpunkter för att få se saken från många sidor! Det är ju rikt och humant ...

P.S. Om jag skulle med ord ange min ståndpunkt nu blefve det så: Ateist. Kristus-hatare. Anarkist-optimat (Frihet för alla, äfven de kloka och starka att göra sig, hvarigenom och om icke de små vore privilegierade verlden skulle regeras af kloka och starka, hvilka skulle öka lusten).

(My authorship: a seeking after truth! Idiotic in itself, maybe, for truth is only convention. One comes into agreement en masse that that should be true and the other should be a lie! ... The contradictions in my authorship occur because I have placed myself or stood for different perspectives in order to see things from many sides! That is certainly rich and humane ...

P.S. If I should specify my perspective in words, it now becomes: Atheist. Christ-hater. Optimal-anarchist. (Freedom of all, including the wise and the strong to make out, whereas if the small were not privileged, the world would be ruled by the wise and the strong who would increase the pleasure).⁷³

So much for the apparent »distancing« that Strindberg supposedly took from his encounter with Nietzsche. As for the commonality with Nietzsche: a fragmented letter with an unknown addressee and collected in *Nietzsche's Briefwechsel* leaves us with an interesting parallel:

... ich komme aus hundert Abgründen, in die noch kein Blick sich gewagt, ich kenne Höhen, wohin kein Vogel sich verflog, ich habe am Eis gelebt, – ich bin verbrannt worden von hundert Schneen: es scheint mir, daß warm und kalt in meinem Munde andere Begriffe sind 1. Ruhm und Ewigkeit 2. Letzter Wille 3. Zwischen Raubvögeln 4. Das Feuerzeichen 5. Die Sonne sinkt 6. Von der Armut des Reichsten.

(I come out of a hundred abysses, in which yet no one dares to gaze. I know the heights where no bird has flown. I have lived on ice and have become burnt from a hundred snows. It seems to me that other concepts are warm and

73 STRINDBERG: 1961, 92. Letter 1612 to Verner von Heidenstam dated May 25, 1888.

cold in my mouth. They are 1. Fame and Eternity 2. Last will 3. Between Birds of Prey 4. The Fire Sign 5. The Sun Sinks 6. From the Poverty of the Richest⁷⁴

The numbered items in this fragment list Dionysian Dithyrambs. Nietzsche's poetry is connected to his vision, his shaping of oppositions, of heights and abysses into literary form. Strindberg for his part had turned his back on his search for truth. His pietism and his socialism were now seen as experimental positions. The *truth* of his authorship was its lack of truth and its abundance of perspectives. He reasoned that if truth is merely convention accepted by the masses, then the truth of the individual resides in the fluidity of his interpretation of his own past. This explains the paradox of his twin declarations: that Nietzsche had given him a system for his *madness* and that it was modern of Nietzsche not to have a system.⁷⁵ The system that Strindberg was referring to in the first statement was no system at all; it was a process. I call this systemless system *the genealogy of self*. This is the key to understanding how Strindberg understands his own Nietzsche reception. He understood the philosopher's work as a theoretical explanation of his own quixotic authorship. This insight was not based on a reconciliation of contradictory elements under the umbrella of a system; rather it was the recognition of a mode of evaluation that was based on a series of narratives that emphasized a dynamic act of creation based on the internalization of seemingly antagonistic principles. Strindberg's truth claim was contingent upon a process of value laden description that bared its own device: the oscillation between a pathos of distance (genealogy) and a pathos of engagement (naming in a polemical mode). Despite the claims of the anti-realists: authenticity was never in the picture.

The correspondence reaffirms Strindberg's contradictory reception of Nietzsche; he saw both the articulation of a system that described his own authorship in philosophical terms and simultaneously denied that Nietzsche had constructed a system. The system for Strindberg's *madness* was the reconciliation of his past through the acceptance of multiple

74 NIETZSCHE: 2003, 495, letter 1162. Translation mine.

75 See my footnote 71, letter to Georg Brandes dated December 4, 1888: »Eget att jag genom Nietzsche finner systemet i min galenskap ...« My translation. »Strange that I find a system for my madness through Nietzsche.« see also Strindberg's letter to Ola Hansson dated December 7, 1888: »Det är modernt af Nietzsche att ej göra system.« My translation. »It is modern of Nietzsche to not construct a system.« This letter is collected in STRINDBERG: 1961, 196, letter 1718.

perspectives organized by the imperatives of his moment, his *Augenblick*. The past is seen as a series of roles played out, an experiment with different perspectives enacted through an authorship. This sheds light on Strindberg's remark to Georg Brandes about his reception of Nietzsche: »När såg jag i Nietzsche, den jag delvis anticiperat, fann hela rörelse formulerad, tog jag in hans ståndpunkt, och ämnar nu allt framgent experimentera med den ståndpunkt för att se hvart den leder.« (When I saw in Nietzsche that which I partially anticipated, the entire movement became formulated. I took in his perspective and intend henceforth to experiment with this perspective to see where it leads.)⁷⁶ Strindberg's understanding of his reception of Nietzsche was that it was an experimental enactment, a fictional performance of the possibilities of the German's philosophy and of his own possibilities previously present in the shadows of his experience, as yet to be articulated by the light of the noonday sun. This performance was not delimited by the influence of Nietzsche's thought. Rather, Nietzsche's thought, an external influence, was conflated in the present tense with a personal understanding of the history of the self.

Despite the dizzy intoxication of the letters to Hansson and von Heidenstam, it was no accident that he would express the experimental nature of his enactment to Georg Brandes. As mentioned previously, Brandes' own position on Nietzsche was rather sober. He felt a responsibility for that which he brought into the world. For Brandes had not only delivered the first public lectures on the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, he had arranged the contact between the two men. Strindberg, in turn, had loaned Ola Hansson *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* in December of 1888. Hansson had previously read *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, but Strindberg fueled his enthusiasm for its author.⁷⁷ Unlike Brandes, Hansson was un-

76 My translation of a letter from Strindberg to Georg Brandes dated April 12, 1890. Collected in BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 298.

77 STRINDBERG: 1938, 10. Letter from Ola Hansson to August Strindberg dated December 5, 1888: »*Jenseits von Gut und Böse* håller jag på med. Jag har förut läst ett arbete af Nietzsche: *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Jag har alldeles samma förnimmelse nu som då: det är som om jag satt i en karusell. Allting går runt för mig. Men jag antar, att den mannen skall läsas mer än en gång och grundligt. Jag saknar den Arkimediska punkten, en stabil sockel af fakta. Det hela är mig en fantastisk hängande trädgård. Vill du, när jag nu sänder dessa böckerna tillbaka, låna mig en ny laddning av samma sort.« (I am now reading *Beyond Good and Evil*. I had previously read a work of Nietzsche's: *On the Genealogy of Morals*. I have the exact same sensation now as then: it is as if I

der the influence of Strindberg's experimentation. While the older, more temperate Brandes had warned Strindberg about Nietzsche's excesses, the younger Hansson had engaged with Strindberg in an intoxicated series of discussions and letters about the philosopher. Strindberg, always an actor aware of his interlocutor's predilections, responded to Brandes' paternal warning with caution and answered Hansson's inebriated exuberance in kind. As a result, when Hansson wrote his article on Nietzsche's growing influence in Scandinavia, he depicted Strindberg as the first acolyte whom Brandes had won for the German. As discussed previously, Strindberg reacted vehemently in a letter dated just five days after Hansson's article came out, his response chiding its author. Strindberg's reminder to Hansson carried the intimation that he had anticipated Nietzsche. It also lacked the nuance of his explanation to Brandes.

Hansson made amends. In 1891, he published a book, also in German, entitled *Das Junge Skandinavien. Vier Essays von Ola Hansson*. The first essay of this collection was about Georg Brandes. Its content was a pastiche of material that Hansson had previously published in the Berlin newspaper, *Freie Bühne*, and *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien*. However, there is one striking emendation in the text. Although Strindberg served as the emblem of the conversion of the northern elite to *Nietzscheanism* in *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien*, in Hansson's 1891 essay on Brandes' influence on Scandinavian literature Strindberg is given the ambiguous status of being a follower who anticipated that which he was to follow:

Och i detta ögonblick finns det väl ingen kulturheros, på vilken det unga Skandinavien ögonblicka med sådan tro som på Nietzsche, vilken Brandes genom sitt föredrag först gjort känd i vidsträckt kretsar. Till honom bekänner sig bland andra även Sveriges största diktarsnille, August Strindberg, varom flera av hans diktningar bära vittnesbörd, isynnerhet novellen *De små*, – skriven, innan Brandes introducerad den tyska diktar-filosofen i Norden –, samt romanerna *Tschandala* och *I havsbandet*.

(And in that moment there was no other cultural hero other than Nietzsche whom »Young Sweden« could gaze at with such belief, and Brandes had first

were sitting in a carousel. Everything is spinning. But I assume that this man should be read thoroughly and more than once. I lack that Archimedian point, a stable factual base. In its entirety, it seems a fantastic hanging garden for me. Will you, when I send these books back, lend me a new charge of the same kind. My translation. According to Ingvar Holm in *Ola Hansson. En studie i åttiotalsromantik*, even though Hansson had previously read *Zur Genealogy der Moral*, his interest in Nietzsche did not begin in earnest until a visit to Strindberg in Holte in November of 1888. See HOLM: 1957, 118.

made him familiar in a wide circle. Sweden's greatest poetic genius, August Strindberg, even can be counted among those who profess for Nietzsche. Several of his works provide testimony of this, particularly the novella *The Small*, written before Brandes introduced the German poet-philosopher to the North –, as well as the novels *Tschandala* and *By the Open Sea*.)⁷⁸

The importance of Hansson's commentary on Strindberg's relationship to Nietzschean thought resides in that his comments set the tone for the scholarship that followed. Hansson registered both Strindberg's enthusiasm and his ambivalence towards Nietzsche in two discrete moments, providing future scholars with a contradictory base on which to build. His own fluctuating statements on the degree of influence which was exerted upon Strindberg by Nietzsche has left a paradoxical legacy. The scholarship has stilled the fluctuation of Hansson's position and negated the possibility of influence. It has relied instead on readings of the *psychological* implications of the contents of the correspondence or a mapping of a monolithic notion of conceptual congruity onto Strindberg's production. Instead, I have suggested that the correspondence bares the mechanism of Strindberg and Nietzsche's formal notions of self-construction expressed by their formulation of the construction of a personal history, which includes a reaction to the force of their encounter.

Hansson's agenda certainly had an effect on his reading of the encounter between the two. However, his agenda was split. Hansson wanted to establish himself as a German writer and was calling for a pan-Germanic cultural revival of which he considered himself to be part. He also valued his relationship to Strindberg, was a great admirer of the older man's work, and the two shared some literary affinities. Hansson's private relationship with Strindberg caused him to amend his public statement on the latter's relationship to Nietzsche.

The first and only German book devoted entirely to Strindberg's relationship to Nietzsche was written by an acquaintance of Strindberg's in 1921. Karl Strecker's *Nietzsche und Strindberg. Mit ihrem Briefwechsel*

78 This essay was reprinted in a Swedish translation in HANSSON: 1921b. The essay in question is entitled »Den nya riktningen (Georg Brandes)« and is found on pages 7–22. On pages 21–22, after praising Brandes' role of bringing an element of German fertility to Scandinavian culture through his early Hegelianism and later Nietzscheanism, Hansson wrote the lines you see in the body above. Though the change is subtle, Hansson has modified his language to suggest continuity in Strindberg's work. See my discussion of Hansson's paradox of continuity and renewal in the excursus that precedes this chapter. The translation of the passage is mine.

(*Nietzsche and Strindberg. With their Correspondence*) reads as a proto-fascist paean to the German spirit. Strecker transformed Strindberg into a pan-German writer and gave him equal status with Nietzsche as they played a rather peculiar role in this writer's imagination: that of two stars shining brightly in the firmament, shedding light upon the »Zeitgeist« at the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Strecker writes, »Germanische Freiheitsgefühle und germanische Unrast sind in ungewöhnlicher Stärke die eigentümlichen Wertemale dieser beiden Genien.« (A German sense of freedom and Germanic restlessness are to an unusual extent the characteristics of both of these geniuses.)⁸⁰ Despite the pathos of Strecker's ideologically intoxicated prose, this was the first time that the letters between Strindberg and Nietzsche were collected.

The value of this book derives from Strecker's personal recollection as an eyewitness and in his contemporaneity to Strindberg. His recollections reinforce the notion of Strindberg's identification with Nietzsche's work. »Er sagte mir 1892 in Berlin, ›Nietzsche hat allein dafür die Worte gefunden, was ich im letzten Jahrzehnt gefühlt und gedacht habe.« (In Berlin in 1892 he said to me: ›Nietzsche alone has found the words for what I have felt and thought in the last decade.)⁸¹ This allows us an insight into how Strindberg expressed his own view of the impact of the encounter while he was in Germany and trying to establish himself as a German author. The fluidity of Strindberg's own notion of his past becomes apparent when Strecker tells the story behind this book. This story is worth repeating.

Strecker knew Strindberg from his Berlin days. He hadn't seen him since 1892, but in 1909 he wrote Strindberg to ask for his Nietzsche correspondence. Strindberg was living in Stockholm at the time and was experiencing a level of acceptance in his homeland that would have been beyond his expectations in 1892. Strindberg had suffered through his years of wandering and poverty. Now, even his previously unpublished work was finding its way to the reading public. In October of 1909, he wrote an introduction to the fourth section of his autobiography, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*). The book was written in 1886, but was first find-

79 »Nietzsche und Strindberg sind die beiden selbstständigsten, stärksten und einflussreichsten Geister am Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.« STRECKER: 1921, II.

80 Ibid., 99. Translation mine.

81 Ibid., 64. Translation mine.

ing its way to the booksellers. This introduction consisted mostly of a listing of his works in chronological order. At the end of the section for the 1880's, he wrote: »*I havsbandet. Nietzsches Filosofi influerar; men Individen går under i strävan till den absoluta Individualismen. Inleder 90-talet: Übermensch.*« (*By the Open Sea. Nietzsche's philosophy influences; but the individual succumbs (goes under) in the striving for absolute individuality. Introduces the 90's: Übermensch.*)⁸² This simple statement alerts us to the change in Strindberg's understanding of his own past: the influence of Nietzsche is concentrated in the form of a novel, and the text tells the story of the failure of the individual to attain an *absolute* individuality. This leads to his downfall and introduces the work of the 1890's. This statement indicates that Strindberg's ideological predisposition at that moment, his »violent individualism«⁸³ had now given way to a notion that the hubris of the individual would be punished by *powers*, which were external and provided the grammar for the limits of individual freedom.⁸⁴ This change was reflected in his response to Strecker as well.

Strindberg replied to Strecker's request on January 30, 1909:

Es handelt sich in meinem Briefwechsel mit Nietzsche u. a. um eine Übersetzung ins Französische, die ich von seinen Schriften machen sollte, und da ich verarmt war, konnte ich das nicht umsonst – also die ewige ungemütliche Geldfrage. Aber inzwischen sandte ich ihm die französische Übersetzung meiner »Friedensnovelle«, *Tortures de Conscience, Samvetskval*. Bald darauf wurde er wahnsinnig und schrieb mir ungefähr folgendes: »Ihre Novelle hat auf mich wie ein Flintenschuß gewirkt. Ich gehe nach Rom um drei Monarchen totzuschießen.« (Es war nämlich damals eine Konferenz in Rom.)

»Der Gekreuzigte«

Ich glaube, dass er mit mir Spaß machen wollte und sandte den Brief an Dr. Georg Brandes. Brandes antwortete, daß er die »Katastrophe schon längst erwartet habe.« Später bekam ich noch eine Zeile, ungefähr so: »Leben Sie wohl, Divorçons!«

(My translation of his writings into French is the subject matter of my correspondence with Nietzsche, among other things. As I was impoverished, I could not do this for free – thus the eternally unpleasant money question. In between, I sent him the French translation of my »peace-novella,« *Pangs of Conscience*. Shortly after that, he went insane and wrote me something like

82 STRINDBERG: 1996a, The introduction is found on pp. 263–267. My translation.

83 See BORLAND: 1956, 24.

84 This change in Strindberg's ideology, however, is not a change in his understanding of the process of identity formation. This issue will be discussed in the last chapter of this study through a reading of Strindberg's *Inferno* and Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*.

this: »Your novella has affected me like a gunshot. I will travel to Rome to assassinate three monarchs. (Namely, there was a conference there at the time).

»The Crucified«

I believe that he wanted to fool around with me and I sent the letter to Dr. Georg Brandes. Brandes answered that »he had already long expected the catastrophe.« Another time I received a note that read something like: Live well, let us be divorced.)⁸⁵

There are some subtle yet telling discrepancies in Strindberg's recollection of the letters. Four points emerge from a comparison of Strindberg's version of the story and the primary source documents. These are as follows: a transposition, a rewording to advantage, an omission, and a distancing.

When Strindberg sent Nietzsche his *peace novella*. Nietzsche responded:

Sie werden die Antwort auf ihre Novelle in Kürze zu hören bekommen – sie klingt wie ein Flintenschuß ... Ich habe einen Fürstentag nach Rom zusammenbefohlen, ich will den jungen Kaiser füsillieren lassen.

Auf Wiedersehn! Denn wir werden uns wieder sehen ... Une seule condition: Divorçons ...

Nietzsche Caesar

(You will soon have an answer about your novella – it sounds like a rifle shot ... I have ordered a convocation of princes in Rome – I mean to have the young emperor shot.

Auf Wiedersehen! For we shall see each other again. Under one condition: let us divorce ...

Nietzsche Caesar)⁸⁶

First, Strindberg confuses two signatures. In the letter, which refers to the peace novella, Nietzsche did not sign off as »Der Gekreuzigte,« but rather as »Nietzsche Caesar«. Second, Strindberg's version of Nietzsche's response implied that he had had an explosive effect (*Aufwirkung*) on the philosopher. Nietzsche's actual response was much more ironic. He wrote that the answer to the *peace novella* would be heard and that it, with it being a bit ambiguous as both *die Antwort* and *die Novelle* are feminine, would sound like a gunshot. The irony here is unmistakable as the answer to Strindberg's pacifist novel sounds (*klingt*) as if it comes out of the barrel of a gun. Also, further accentuating the irony, Nietzsche

85 STRECKER: 1921, 27. Translation mine.

86 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 567–568. The English translation is from MIDDLETON: 1996, 344. Note: Middleton does not translate the French – so the last line of the letter is my translation.

wore the mask of the martial Caesar, not the peaceful Christ, and ordered a march on Rome. Thirdly, Strindberg neglected to mention his own answer to Nietzsche's letter where he cites Horace's *Carmina* II number 10, and added »Interdum juvat insaniere« (Meanwhile let us rejoice in our madness),⁸⁷ signing off as »Strindberg (Deus, optimus, maximus),«⁸⁸ thereby upping the ante. To this Nietzsche replied in the beginning of January: »Eheu? ... Nicht mehr Divorçons ... Der Gekreuzigte.«⁸⁹ Lastly, Strindberg recalled correctly that he had sent Brandes the letter and questioned Nietzsche's sanity; however, he forgot that he had put forward the proposition that Nietzsche was mad, and, out of fear that he would be compromised by association, asked for Brandes' advice.⁹⁰ Brandes replied the very next day. In his response he reminded Strindberg that he had criticized Nietzsche's »svulmende Selvfølelse« (swelling sense of self)⁹¹ and that Strindberg had defended Nietzsche. Brandes went on to speculate if Nietzsche were really mad and expressed sorrow that such a rich spirit could be beset by megalomania. Strindberg also forgot to mention that Brandes' lack of surprise at Nietzsche's condition was expressed in the following manner:

Lidt Haab har jeg dog endnu. Naar man som jeg i mere end en Snes Aar er gaaet om som Doctor i det store Hospital af syge, saarede, exalterede og halvfjottede Forfængeligheder, som kaldes Literaturen – forbauses man ikke mere over nogen Ytring af Selv-tilbedelse hos en Skribent, især en længe miskjendt.

(Despite this, I still have little hope. When one has, as I have, played doctor in the great literary hospital filled with sick, wounded, exalted, and half-wittedly vain individuals for more than a score of years, – then one is not astonished

87 Translation from MIDDLETON: 1996, 344.

88 STRINDBERG: 1961, letter 1739.

89 NIETZSCHE: 1984a, 572. The irony is even further compounded here – Nietzsche's farewell signature is in response to Strindberg's signature in the previous letter: »Strindberg (Deus, Optimus, Maximus),« so we have »Der Gekreuzigte (The Crucified)« asking for a divorce from God.

90 BRANDES, E., and G. BRANDES: 1952–1956, 296. Letter from Strindberg to Georg Brandes, January 3, 1889. »... nu tror jag vår vän Nietzsche är galen och hvad värre är, han kan kompromettera oss, såvida den listige Slaven (minns Turgenjeff-Daudet, tänk på den slipade Tolstoi) skojar med oss allesamman! ... Was Thun?« (... now I believe our friend Nietzsche is mad and what is even worse, he can compromise us, provided that sly Slav (remember Turgenjev-Daudet, think about that cunning Tolstoy) is putting us all on ... What is to be done? My translation.

91 Ibid. Georg Brandes to Strindberg.

any more over some expression of self-worship by an author, especially one who has long been suspected.)⁹²

Strindberg failed to recall how Brandes' assessment of Nietzsche's condition was tied into his notion of the literary environment as a whole, and, recalling how Brandes had introduced Strindberg as a half-crazed but true genius, by association back to Strindberg himself. Strindberg distanced himself from his own fear of being perceived as mad. Another form of distancing also took place. Strindberg told Strecker that Brandes had the letters, completely forgetting that Brandes had sent the letters back. Strecker wrote Brandes, who informed him of Strindberg's mistake. It is interesting that Strindberg placed the correspondence in the hands of the one who made it possible.

While Strecker has been merely seen as a curiosity and Ola Hansson's pan-German agenda faded with time, the closeness of Hansson's relationship to Strindberg added weight to his statements for future scholars. The two men's disagreement over the extent of Nietzsche's influence and their correspondence about their reception of the philosopher was to become a staple of the Scandinavian and German scholarship on the subject.

The scholarship has resolved the disagreement between the two perspectives by smoothing it out and deeming Strindberg's encounter with Nietzsche to be a passing phase in the life of the Swede and a document of the philosopher's imminent demise.

Parting company with these lines of thought, I claim that the incongruities that face the teller of this tale provide us with an opening through which we can discern its significance. It is these incongruities that exemplify the commonality in Strindberg and Nietzsche's projects. This commonality can be found on the level of the construction of subjectivity. Both Nietzsche and Strindberg share a notion of subjectivity that denies a sense of foundation. Recollection is in dynamic tension with forgetting, as the self knows no stable history. The construction of self is dependent upon a struggle between forces in a polemical present tense. Both men share the notion of character as fiction, see historical conditions as an internalized imperative to re-interpret, and valorize the fluidity of this interpretative optic dependent only on the interests of the organism in ceaseless reformation. Contradiction, the saying against what was previ-

92 Ibid., 297.

ously said, replaces the notion of a stable self. Thus, our version of the story begins at a moment when the past is a point of contention. This choice is appropriate to our subject matter. For the crux of the encounter between Nietzsche and Strindberg is the commonality in the way that they bare the device of their reconstruction of both a personal and a cultural history. The self is a site of conflict, and self-interpretation is shown to be a reconstructive process, which changes the past, by its very enactment.

Appropriately, the first problem that arises in the telling of the story of the encounter between the two men is the conflict between the public and the private Strindberg. This conflict is magnified when we factor in August Strindberg's fluid conception of his own past. It is even further complicated when we consider Strindberg's project in the light of bourgeois realism, which claims to make the private lives of its class of readers transparent to themselves. Strindberg radicalized this project by making himself and his own private life the subject of an autobiographical project written in the form of fiction. In other words, he made the fiction of his own private life public. This left him with only one truth claim, the paradoxical and mutable claim of being both an aspect of continuity and renewal. He became by his own reckoning, the modern.

I senare tiden spridda uppgifter att mitt skriftställeri skulle vara baserat på Nietzsche, utan vidare, ber jag här få besvara.

(Recently, there have been scattered reports that my authorship is based on Nietzsche. Without further ado, I ask permission to respond here.)⁹³

In 1894, a group of Scandinavian authors published a collection of essays written about Strindberg. Included in this collection was a terse two-page article by Strindberg himself. The title of his contribution is *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* (My Relationship to Nietzsche). It is interesting that Strindberg chose to comment upon a »relationship« which was both short-lived and impossible to rekindle. Yet in this strategically placed apologia, Strindberg elected to respond to a perception that he had helped to create and at one time had hoped to exploit. As Gunnar Brandell has remarked about Strindberg's Berlin years:

93 STRINDBERG: 1918, 323–324, *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* (My Relationship to Nietzsche). Originally published in *En bok om Strindberg* (A Book about Strindberg) in 1894.

Ola Hansson och Georg Brandes i kompanjonskap hade också för tyskarna tolkat en av deras landsmän, den nyupptäckte filosofen Friedrich Nietzsche. Till Strindbergs rykte hörde att han hade varit i kontakt med den märklige mannen, vilket inte skadade hans sak. Vid ett tillfälle sökte han efter Nietzschebrev för att visa upp dem i krog eller salong, glömsk av att hade lämnat dem kvar i Stockholm.

(Ola Hansson and Georg Brandes had in concert interpreted one of the Germans' countrymen for them, the newly discovered philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Strindberg had been in contact with this remarkable man and this enhanced his reputation. It certainly did not hurt his case. When the opportunity arose, he searched for his Nietzsche letters to show them off in a bar or salon, forgetful that he had left them behind in Stockholm.)⁹⁴

Strindberg had at one time hoped to gain recognition for his association with Nietzsche and wanted to ride the wave of the growing enthusiasm for the philosopher in Germany.⁹⁵ This association with Nietzsche helped pave the way for Strindberg when he traveled to Berlin in 1892. Disappointed with his lack of success at home, Strindberg had hoped to become known as a pan-German author.⁹⁶ This article, which was written after Strindberg had decided to try his hand as a scientist in France, reflected another interest. Strindberg now wanted to be seen as a scientist and in literature as a scientific author who had experimented upon himself and had anticipated his own development. In any case, Strindberg seems split between allure of momentary ambitions and the weight of his by any standards interesting past.

The burden of this past, populated with letters of intoxicated indulgence about Friedrich Nietzsche, was lifted through a public appeal;

94 BRANDELL: 1985, 287.

95 Or at least, Strindberg's understanding of the German cultural situation was influenced by Hansson whose residence in Berlin predated his own. Hansson wrote Strindberg on April 8, 1890: »Alla tyska publikationer ha nu i en hast blifvet fulla af Nietzsche.« My translation. »All the German publications have suddenly become filled with Nietzsche.« Ola Hansson: Letter to August Strindberg collected in STRINDBERG: 1938.

96 Strindberg, in fact, would find a more receptive audience in Germany than at home. Directors such as Max Reinhardt were much more willing to stage some of Strindberg's more controversial plays than his own countryman. A good example: After the turn of the century, Max Reinhardt established a Strindberg repertoire which premiered new plays and staged some of the older, more controversial dramas. *Fröken Julie*, written in the summer of 1888, was part of a series of Strindberg productions staged by Reinhardt. It played to great success at the Kleines Theater in Berlin in 1904. Its Swedish premiere was in 1906 – in Lund – a production directed by a young actor, August Falck, in a prominent but small university town, staged far away from the capital.

explained away in a series of terse statements, which read like a chronicle. Strindberg claimed that what had been regarded as the Nietzschean strain in his work was, in fact, a continuation of the train of thought that had begun in 1886 with the writing of the fourth volume of his autobiography, *Tjänstekvinnans son* (*Son of a Servant*). With the writing of *Författaren* (*The Author*), he claims to have »arbetat mig ur äldre vantrö, invuxen från ungdomen« (worked myself out of older false beliefs inherited from my youth).⁹⁷ He continues by echoing his 1889 admonition against Hansson's *Nietzscheanismus in Skandinavien* by mentioning that he had published *Die Kleinen* (*The Small*) in the *Neue Freie Presse*. But there is a significant change in this retrospective public echo, which in the passing of time resounds to the point where we hear the echo of an echo and so on. For here, the site of the confluence between Strindberg and Nietzsche's thought branches out into a few more tributaries, and the protest that Strindberg lodged against Hansson converges with his statement to Georg Brandes that he would experiment with a Nietzschean perspective. The texts that Strindberg had presented to Hansson in defense of his intellectual autonomy multiply in *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche*. *Schleichwege* has been forgotten, but *Die Großen* (*The Great*) and *Kampf der Gehirne* (*Battle of the Brains*) are added to the list of texts published in the Viennese newspaper. *Fadren* (*The Father*) and the novel *Hemsöborna* (*The People of Hemsö*) are also mentioned as being part of an experiment in which the Nietzschean perspective was tentatively enacted.⁹⁸

The chronicle continues by addressing the events of the next year, 1888, by stating that his *war of liberation*⁹⁹ continued and that *Fröken Julie* (*Miss Julie*) furnishes the proof that he had come upon the same results as Nietzsche, who was completely unknown to him at the time.¹⁰⁰

97 STRINDBERG: 1918, 323, »Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche«. My translation.

98 Ibid. »... och hade 1887, i de av Neue Freie Presse tryckta novellerna *Die Kleinen*, *Die Großen* och *Kampf des Gehirnes* samt i dramat *Fadren* och romanen *Hemsöborna* försöksvis intagit den ståndpunkt som numera betecknas som Nietzsches.« (... and had in 1887 through the publishing of *Die Kleinen*, *Die Grossen*, and *Kampf des Gehirnes* in the *Neue Freie Presse*, as well as in the drama *The Father* and the novel *The People of Hemsö* took in the Nietzschean perspective by way of experiment.) My translation.

99 Ibid. *Befrielsekriget* is the term used.

100 *Fröken Julie* is known in English as either *Miss Julie* or *Lady Julie*, depending on the translation. It is germane to note, that while Strindberg uses this play as an example of his anticipation of Nietzsche, the foreword to the play was written after Strindberg

The encounter itself and how it came to be is dealt with tersely. *Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche* concludes: »De som följt min skriftställarebana i dess utvecklingsskeden veta åtminstone alltför väl huru tidigt jag intog den s. k. Nietzscheståndpunkten gentemot konventionell moral och kvinnoemancipation, för att de ej skola med rena samveten giva mig mitt och Nietzsche sitt.« (Those who have followed the trajectory of my authorship in this stage of development know at least all too well how early I took the so called Nietzschean perspective on conventional morality and feminism, so that they could not with a clean conscience not give me what is mine and Nietzsche what is his.)¹⁰¹ The protest ends with a call for separation, and the scholarship has up to now heeded this call. In Strindberg's first, last, and only public statement on his encounter with Nietzsche, he set the stage for a series of scholars who posit the impossibility of influence. Yet, through a condensation of his own past in the interests of his momentary ambitions, Strindberg pointed once again to the relation between separation and identity formation. The struggle of being modern, of creating lasting things in a sea of change, had replaced the desire to depict what is *real*. Strindberg based his notion of selfhood on an oscillation between distance and proximity, this movement reconstructing and inflecting the past, making it present through a polemical voice, all the while reclaiming experience through naming. The question for Strindberg was not whether to be or not to be Nietzschean. For him, it was more the paradox of both being and not being Nietzschean that held sway and perhaps this is the most Nietzschean response of all.

had read the philosopher. It is in this foreword that Strindberg introduces his notion of the characterless character. Strindberg admits that the foreword was written under the influence of Nietzsche. I would claim that the foreword is interesting in that it provides us with a window through which we can see how Strindberg re-evaluated his own *pre-Nietzschean*, »Nietzschean play« *post* Nietzsche.

101 STRINDBERG: 1918, 324, »Mitt förhållande till Nietzsche«.